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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JEDDAH 000014

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [CASC](#) [KISL](#) [KWBG](#) [PREL](#) [SA](#) [YM](#) [IR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: JEDDAH GOVERNOR PRINCE MISHAAL BIN MAJID'S  
ASSESSMENTS OF YEMEN, ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT, IRAN

REF: A. 09 JEDDAH 0275

[B](#). JEDDAH 0010

[C](#). 09 JEDDAH 484(NOTAL)

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Classified By: Consul General Martin R. Quinn for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. In December 29 introductory meeting with Ambassador, Prince Mishaal bin Majid bin Abdulaziz, Governor of Jeddah (ref A), warned that Yemen could become like Somalia in the absence of development projects funded by the GCC, U.S., and Europe. Skeptical that Israel wants peace given ongoing settlement construction, Mishaal urged the United States to take decisive action to resolve the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which he said damages America's standing and increases Iranian influence in the Middle East. The Jeddah governor expressed satisfaction with Hajj 2009 -- which succeeded despite H1N1, Iranian threats, global recession, and flash floods -- and predicted 5 million Hajj visitors in Saudi Arabia by 2025, including increasing numbers of pilgrims from the states of the former Soviet Union. Mishaal agreed to look into two American Citizen Services cases. End summary.

INTERNATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION PLAN: YEMEN CAN BECOME "HEAVEN OR HELL"

[1](#)2. (C) Prince Mishaal bin Majid bin Abdulaziz, Governor of Jeddah since 1998, began the December 29 meeting with Ambassador by raising security issues in the Middle East, focusing on areas of Africa and Asia that are "dangerous" for Saudi Arabia, particularly Yemen, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, and Somalia. Invoking the Ottoman Turks' occupation of Yemen and Egypt, Prince Mishaal said the geography and people of Yemen are both formidable, "very tough." Saudi Arabia wants to help Yemen, not fight in it. The Yemenis are "good, hard-working people," but if things remain the same they will continue to fight, Mishaal predicted. Yemenis are not united; each tribe is different, and there are Sunnis and Zaidis. Yemeni President Abdullah Saleh is not doing well in Mishaal's opinion. The GCC, U.S., and Europe need to build up Yemen by investing in the economy, constructing schools, educating Yemenis, and providing technology. Asked how this might be done, Mishaal replied that an international reconstruction plan should be written for Yemen. Saudi Arabia will no longer write a blank check, as in the past. While Saudi Arabia can help with roads, and everyone should share in building Yemen, Yemen has the potential "to become a

heaven or a hell." Mishaal insisted that "if we don't work hard, the Iranians will take full advantage, as they have in Somalia." Explaining his bleak assessment, Mishaal remarked, "I say what I feel. I'm not a diplomat."

UNRESOLVED PALESTINIAN ISSUE -- "A TOOL FOR IRAN TO FIGHT US"

13. (C) Turning to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Prince Mishaal argued that "only the U.S. can fix it" by "becoming a judge rather than a partner" in the peace process. "We have had no solutions in the 1940,s, '50,s, and '60,s and the problem just keeps getting bigger." Pressing a medical metaphor, Mishaal continued: "Sometimes when you go to the doctor, he not only gives you medicine but tells you that he must cut something off that you can live without, but you live. But if you don't make the decision, then one day you may die of the disease." Mishaal went on to say that absence of a solution will produce hardship for everyone: "We don't hate America -- especially the American people -- but when it comes to the Middle East everyone changes his position." America he said is associated in the popular mind with Israel, and failure to solve the core issue has the result of "giving our enemy the tools to fight us. Iran is playing with Hamas." Mishaal said he was not sure what is going on with the Iranian opposition, but hoped it has the effect of waking Iran up. "Iran," he said, "wants to be only power controlling the area. If it reaches that point they will destroy everyone." The Ambassador spoke to Special Envoy Mitchell's efforts on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Mishaal's assessment was skeptical: "There is no hope for the moment. Yesterday Israel said it would build more houses, and the United States wants me to believe Israel wants peace."

HAJJ 2009: SUCCESS DESPITE H1N1, IRAN, RECESSION, FLOOD

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14. (U) Accepting congratulations on the success of Hajj 2009, Prince Mishaal commented that there were four problems this year: the economy, rain, Iran and H1N1. SAG really felt that it must succeed in this Hajj -- "Thank God we did." This year SAG implemented a new model for Hajj, with 100,000 troops accompanying pilgrims from site to site. Although it was very hard to manage, the troops behaved in a professional manner. "It will be even better next year," he asserted. The Kingdom has a good structure in place and has learned to handle the pilgrimage challenge well. Observing that a number of countries once part of the Soviet Union did not send pilgrims before but are starting to do so now, Mishaal predicted the country will be managing 5 million Hajj pilgrims in 15 years. Expressing pride in what he described as Saudi Arabia's "1400 years of service to the Islamic world," the Governor noted that the Saudi Government never makes money from the Hajj, but instead spends three times what individual pilgrims pay (est. \$6,000 per Hajji) -- per pilgrimage.

NOVEMBER 25 FLOOD: "CRISIS WILL CHANGE JEDDAH"

15. (U) Alluding to the November 25 flash floods that displaced thousands of Jeddawis, Prince Mishaal said the flood crisis posed an unprecedented challenge in Jeddah. He praised the many volunteers that came out to help victims and promised the crisis "will change the face of Jeddah." In two to three months, he predicted, possibly after conclusion of the work of the investigation committee which he co-chairs with Mecca Governor Prince Khaled Al Faisal (ref B), "there will be many changes."

HELP WITH ACS CASES

16. (U) Ambassador raised two American Citizen Service cases and secured the Jeddah Governor's promise to look into them. On the case of Mr. Bandele Hinton, detained since mid-November (ref C), Mishaal said the matter would not go to court and indicated that Mr. Hinton should be deported in the near future. He seemed less familiar with the year-long exit request of Mr. Floyd Young, but invited the Consulate to send him a letter on the subject (which has been done).

COMMENT

¶7. (C) Prince Mishaal expounded at greater length on international issues (Arab-Israeli and Yemen) than we have seen before, offering bleak and skeptical overall assessments. Previous meetings over the past year had drawn him out mainly on internal Jeddah matters. Though plainly speaking his ("undiplomatic") mind on political questions, Mishaal maintained his usual informal, friendly, engaging manner throughout the meeting. End comment.

¶8. (U) Ambassador Smith has cleared this message.

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